

Time's Up by TheMikeWheelers (jasongracefully)

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Summary:

Things have been tense between Mike and El, Dustin is determined to help.

Time's Up

“You have one hour until I unlock the door. Now in the meantime maybe you should actually talk to each other!”

“Dustin shut up!” Mike screamed through the wall of his bedroom, “Just let us out, this is ridiculous!”

Dustin didn't respond, but there were the sounds of footsteps walking away. Mike sighed and pushed his back against the wall.

He was exactly where he wanted to be. Locked in his own bedroom with the one person he did not want to talk to right now.

El stood there awkwardly through this, not knowing what to say. When Dustin asked them to go get some comics from Mike's room, she jumped back in horror when she heard the door slam and the clicking of the lock turning.

There was then a few minutes of banging and yelling, in which Dustin exclaimed he knew something was happening between them and they needed to talk. To this Mike simply denied and El stood silently.

Had something been happening between them? El didn't even know herself. She had come back from the Upside Down a few months ago, and at first all the boys seemed thrilled to see her, especially Mike.

Her and Mike were inseparable when she first returned, they would always grip each other's hands like any second they'd lose the other. Mike spent all the time he could with El, she loved every second of it.

But then something changed. They were just sitting in Mike's basement, he was showing her a new comic book he got. And then they weren't talking, just staring at each other.

Mike's face turned red, a 'blush', El remembered one of the boys calling it once. Then before they knew it they were leaning in and Mike did the weird thing where he put his lips onto hers.

Her eyelashes fluttered closed as she felt his mouth on her. It lasted

only moment before he pulled away, much redder than before.

It was then they heard a shuffling upstairs, indicating someone was coming. Mike looked the other way and finished his discussion of the comic.

Nancy opened the basement door and skipped down the stairs to tell the two that dinner was ready if they wanted to eat something.

So they went upstairs, it wasn't until after dinner when El was talking to Nancy that she remembered the thing Mike had done.

There was a picture sitting on Nancy's dresser. Resting in a heart-shaped frame was Nancy and Steve doing the mouth thing.

El pointed to the picture, "What's that?"

Nancy felt a blush erupt, but ignored it, "That's, um, kissing. Steve and I do it sometimes. You put your mouth on someone you like. Why?"

El shrugged, taking note of the blush making its way onto Nancy's face and remembering Mike's similar red reaction. Kissing must be one of those private things Mike was teaching her about.

Still, she thought of one thing Nancy mentioned. "Someone you like." Mike had said that once before, the first time he kissed her. He said you go to the Snow Ball with someone you like.

It was later that night, after El had gone home, that Mike found out about the interaction. He went to Nancy's room to ask for some now-forgotten favor when he saw the new picture proudly displayed.

"Ew, do you really have to put that out for everyone to see?" He jabbed at Nancy.

"Do you think you're the only person to comment on that tonight?"

"Huh?"

"El earlier. She asked what it was about," Nancy distractedly answered.

Mike's face went white, "Wait she asked what kissing is? As in she didn't know until tonight?"

"Yeah... Are you okay Mike?" Nancy noticed the surprised face her baby brother wore.

"I'm fine, it's just... Nothing. I'm gonna go to sleep early. I'll talk to you tomorrow."

And with that he was out of the room, practically racing out.

That day was almost two weeks ago, and here they were, locked in Mike's bedroom.

El wished she knew what was going on, but Dustin forcing Mike to talk to her wasn't what she wanted. Ever since that day Mike had been practically ignoring her. He would respond to her questions and he was never rude or anything, but that inseparability of them was gone. It was like he was ignoring her for some reason.

Mike pounded on the wall for a few minutes, calling out to Dustin, but to no avail.

He slumped himself onto his bed, and El sat nervously down herself.

"You're okay right? I know you don't like being stuck in places?"

She wanted to be happy he was concerned for her, but his tone was more like he felt obligated to ask. She nodded her head and they went back to silence.

They sat in silence for a while, just trying to wait out the hour until Dustin came to let them out.

Meanwhile El just thought how if this had happened just a few weeks ago it would be completely different. Mike would be talking to her, making her laugh, and they would be keeping each other company instead of just waiting in silence to get away.

After a while of silence Mike started to grumble to himself.

"Dustin's to stupid. There's nothing going on. I don't need to be stuck

in here.”

El saw her chance, and with the same innocence she always asked questions with, she whispered, “Well then how come he thinks something is happening?”

Mike was startled by her response, “He’s ju-”

“Is something happening?”

Mike went blank over that. He looked down, refusing to meet her eyes. Because God if he looked at her big, beautiful eyes then all he had done to ignore them would crumble away.

“Mike.”

“It’s nothing okay. Nothing’s happening!”

El went quiet for a moment, startled by his response. After a few seconds she gained up the courage to ask again, “Then why won’t you talk to me?”

He looked down again.

“Mi-”

“It’s because if I don’t then I won’t be able to stop! It’s because it’s not fair to you that you need to deal with me after everything else!”

“What are you talking about?”

“You obviously don’t need a mouthbreather like me getting obsessed with you. And every time I talk to you it’s impossible to ignore how I feel,” He was finally looking at her, and her expression changed to confusion.

She gave him a quizzical look, not even knowing what part of that to ask him about.

Mike felt his heart beat a billion times a minute, “I really like you El and I’ve already humiliated myself enough. Asking you to the Snow Ball, kissing you, all that.”

"I like you too, Mike."

"No you don't. Or maybe you think you do, but you don't understand. I like you as so much more than a friend, I can't just ignore how I feel about you!"

"More than a friend...? Like Steve and Nancy?" El felt herself ask without thinking.

Mike felt an instant awkwardness, he didn't exactly want to bring his sister into this conversation. Instead of responding, he just nodded sheepishly.

"Nancy said they kiss. They like each other. Isn't that what we do? What makes them more than friends?"

"El don't you understand! That's why I'm ignoring you! You don't even know what these feelings are and it's not fair for me to hold mine onto you!"

El backed up at that, not expecting the outburst.

It was silent for a minute until a familiar voice rang out from downstairs.

"5 more minutes!" Dustin sang.

El looked at Mike and he looked back at her, her eyes filled with desire to know what he was talking about.

"Mike please."

He couldn't say no to her. No matter how much he tried to ignore her and his feelings, he couldn't do it, not when she was looking at him like that.

"Steve and Nancy are different than friends. They're boyfriends and girlfriend. They're more than just friends. They kiss and go on dates and do all that stuff."

El nodded her head, attempting to follow along to every word.

“Why aren’t we like that? They do it because they like each other, don’t we?”

Mike felt his heart hurt in his chest, it wasn’t fair to her. She didn’t even understand what all this meant.

“It’s- it’s more than liking a friend. It’s more like loving them. You fall in love with someone and they’re like friends but they’re more,” Mike took a breath in, desperately wishing he didn’t have to explain this, “Me and you. We’re friends. And it’s not fair for me to talk to you when I love you because you don’t even know the difference between liking a friend and a boyfriend.”

El opened her mouth to respond, but was cut off by the door slamming open.

“Time’s up!”

Dustin stood there with a smirk on his face.

“So how have you guys been?” He grinned, “Anything new?”

Mike grabbed El’s hand and pulled her out of the room. He rolled his eyes at Dustin, “Thanks so much dude. Were fine, we don’t need to be trapped in a room together. Right El?”

El wasn’t sure what to say. Were they fine? Mike was holding her hand again, the tension between them was certainly going. But there still remained all he had said to her. He loved her, but he thought she didn’t love him back.

That was ridiculous. She may not understand all the parts of whatever loving someone involved, but if she knew one thing it was that she loved Mike more than anyone.

He took care of her and taught her new things and whenever she talked to him she felt her heart burn inside her. She cared about all her friends, but Mike was the only person she felt this way about it. He was her favorite person, she wanted nothing else other than to be with him.

And from all she could tell, that was love, wasn’t it?

So as Mike pulled her out of his room, away from a chuckling Dustin, she squeezed his hand and let out a practically inaudible whisper.

“Mike.”

He turned his head to see her reassuring expression.

“I don’t understand everything, and I don’t know how to explain it. But I know I love you too.”

Mike felt a small smile tugging at his lips, so he just looked down towards his feet, rubbed his thumb over her still-tightly-gripped hand, and the pair kept walking down the hallway.

A million things to say, a million more things to tell the other, but all that mattered right now was they were talking. Time had run out back in Mike’s room, but that didn’t stop them. They were still talking, they were holding hands, they were just fine.

They would always be just fine.